

City of College Station

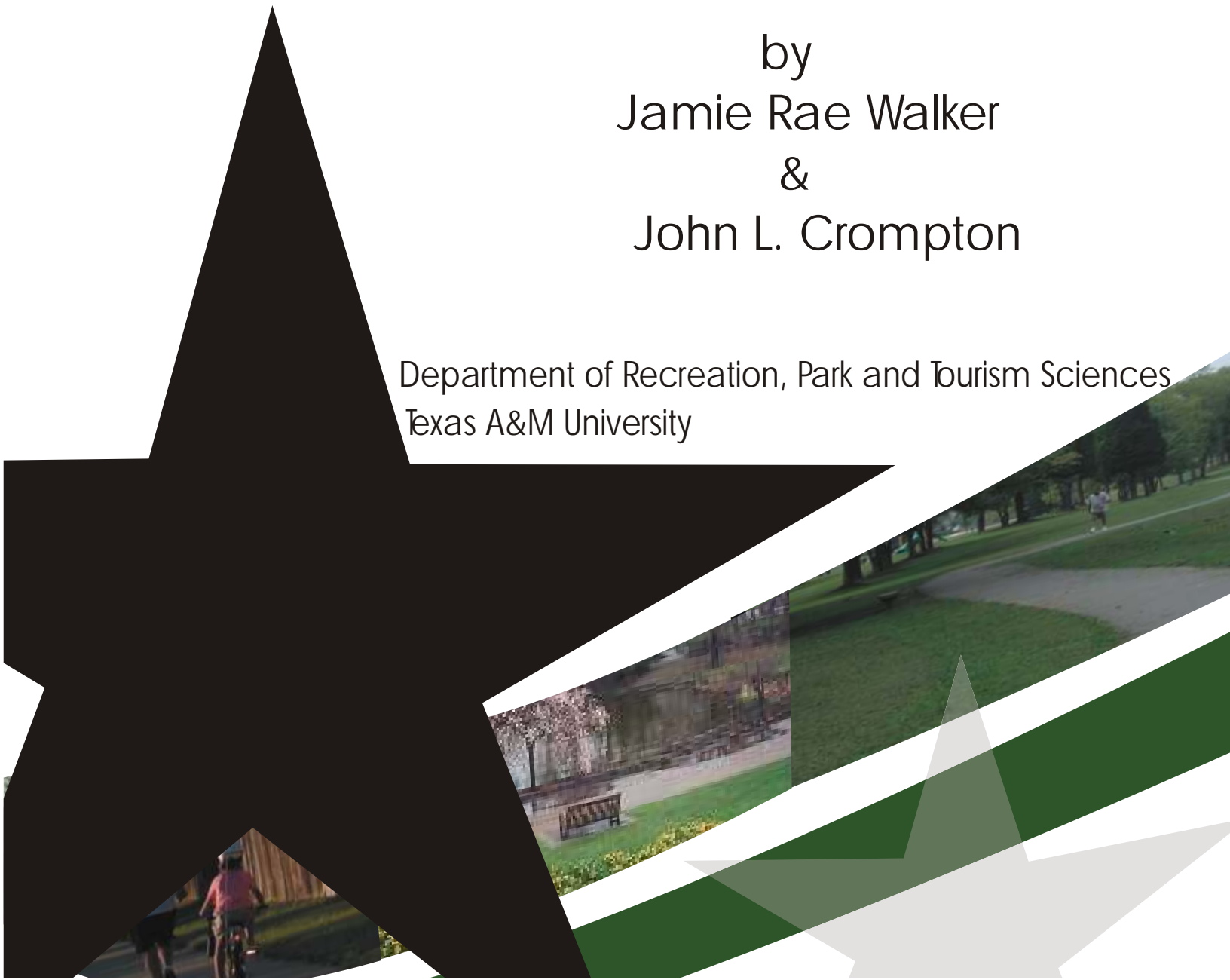
Department of Parks and Recreation

Citywide Needs Assessment

2005

by
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Introduction

This Needs Assessment was developed to provide the City of College Station Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) staff, community leaders, and citizens with guidelines for investment decisions designed to address the city's park and recreation needs for the next 10 years.

As part of its process to update the current Master Plan, the College Station PARD contracted with the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University to conduct a city-wide needs assessment. Focus

groups, a public meeting, and a community wide survey were administered to ascertain and prioritize the needs presented in this report.

The focus groups were held in January through March 2005. Input from these sessions was used as the basis for formulating a questionnaire which was mailed to city residents in June.

In July, reduced versions of the

questionnaire was delivered to

PARD and to city employees in other

departments. After two follow-up mailouts to

residents who had not responded and one follow-up post

card delivered to employees, the data from the questionnaire

were analyzed in September/October and results

were presented to the Park Board

in October 2005.



Focus Group Procedures

Twelve focus groups were facilitated between January and March. Local Citizens were invited by PARD staff members to one of these twelve groups:

Neighborhood Associations

External Athletics

Environmental Groups

Aquatics

Lincoln Center

Internal Athletics

Citizens with Disabilities

Teens

PARD Advisory Board

Senior Citizens

Special Interests

The 128 citizens who participated in the focus groups utilizing a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) provided and ranked responses to the question:

“Which park and recreation facilities and services are lacking in the College Station area which are necessary to support the needs of your family or the organization you represent?”

Representatives from each group, excluding the Teens and the Park Board groups, were invited to a wrap-up focus group to participate in a combined NGT. In addition to the focus groups, 36 citizens who attended the public meeting also participated in a NGT.

Focus Group Findings

The NGT unveiled 7ve major themes: a need for trails and linkages, more non-designated open space, improved communication, additional pools, and a community center.

Residents who participated in the NGT felt that the city needed more trails; needed to link trails to each other; and needed to link trails to schools, work places, residential neighborhoods, recreation centers, and restaurants.

They believed that the city needed additional open space for non-planned, non-scheduled play. Residents felt that neighborhood ballfields and larger open spaces are continuously set-aside for scheduled practices and games in the evenings and on weekends. They articulated a need to increase the amount of landscaped open space which incorporated flowers, gardens, and trees.

There was an expressed desire for the city to enhance communication

especially by improving the

web page. Concerns were

voiced about overcrowding at, and

accessibility to, pools. Several of the

groups also gave priority to building a water

park in College Station.

These data were used as input for developing the city-

wide survey which was used to obtain a representative view of

the priorities of College Station residents.

Additional information on the NGT process,

participation, and detailed results from each

of the focus groups is available in

Appendix A.

Survey Procedures

The survey was developed from the focus group data and included questions on respondents' frequency of use and on the perceived contributions of parks and recreation to overall community goals.

The survey was mailed to 1200 College Station residents. It was structured so that 800 would be delivered to single family homes and 400 would go to multiple dwelling units. The assumption was that single family homes were more likely to contain permanent College Station residents, while multiple dwelling units were more likely to reflect the community's college population. Greater emphasis was given to the permanent resident group since they are likely to have most invested in the community.

The two groups of 800 and 400 residents were drawn from the city's list of utility customers. Every nth name was drawn from the list so it was a probability (representative) sample. The 1200 total number was used because based on past surveys of this nature, the research team anticipated receiving a 40% return rate and 450-500 was viewed as the minimum number of responses needed to undertake analyses of any sub-groups that may be requested.

Every survey included a cover letter offering two incentives: (1) a buy one admit one free ice skating pass, and (2) a chance to win 1 of 4 family summer pool passes. Three days after mailing the surveys, reminder post cards were sent to every resident. Two weeks later, a second survey was sent to all non-respondents. Four weeks after the first mail-out, a final survey was sent to the remaining non-respondents.

In July, a representative from each city department was asked to serve as a liaison for distribution of the city employee survey. Steve Beachy, the Director of Parks and Recreation, sent an e-mail to all city



staff members which requested their time and assistance in completing the surveys, and described the importance of their responses. Each department liaison received a packet comprised of surveys and reminder post cards for each employee in his/her department. Liaisons were instructed to distribute the surveys first, followed by the post cards.

The reduced versions of the survey instruments that were sent to all city employees and to all PARD staff are included in Appendix B.

Survey Results -- Participants

Five hundred and forty-six (546) residents, 58 PARD employees, and 286 employees from other city departments returned usable surveys, which represented 45%, 81%, and 46% percent response rates, respectively. A profile of the residents who completed the questionnaire was compared with the profile of College Station's total population which was provided by the city's planning department. The data in Figure 1 show that the youngest age cohort, 18-34, was underrepresented in the sample, while the 35-64 and 65+ age groups were overrepresented. The underrepresentation among 18-34 year olds presumably reflects the much smaller university enrollments in the summer and, hence, the fewer young people resident in the city at the time of the survey. This interpretation is supported by the imbalance in profiles shown between students and non-students in Table 1C. This probably also explains some of the underrepresentation of apartment dwellers and overrepresentation of single family home owners (Table 1B).

However, some of this imbalance was deliberately structured into the survey by selecting twice as many single family homes as apartments to be surveyed in order to avoid apartment respondents' priorities from dominating the results.

The ethnic, gender, and rental/owner profiles of the sample's respondents were reasonably compatible with those of the city (Tables 1D, 1E and 1F in Appendix C). Additional data on response rates and demographics are available in Appendix C.

Figure 1A Age

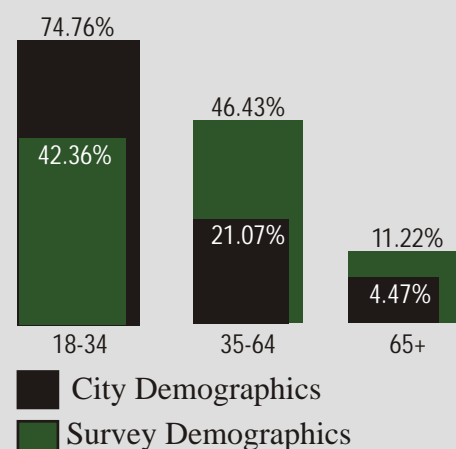


Table 1B Dwelling Type

	Survey	CS*
	%	%
Mobile Home	1.01	1.62
Apartment	17.71	52.02
Town House/Condo	6.84	5.37
Single Family	74.45	40.98
Total	100	100

Table 1C Student Population

	Survey	CS*
	%	%
Student	25.75	53.5
Non Student	74.25	46.5
Total	100	100

Survey Results-- Frequency of Use



Neighborhood/Community Parks and Trails/Paths were the most used amenities among College Station Residents.

Frequency of use data are presented in Table 2. **Neighborhood/Community Parks** and **Walking Trails/Bike Trails** were by far the most used amenities with 40% and 34% of College Station residents reporting that someone in their household used them once a week or more (Table 2). The dominance of Neighborhood/Community Parks was reinforced by the relatively high levels of use reported for Playgrounds, Ponds/Lakes and Picnic Tables/Pavilions which were ranked third (27.8%), 7th (25.3%) and sixth (19.5%), respectively, when aggregating daily, weekly, and monthly use, since these elements are located in parks.

Swimming pools were ranked third with 27.6% of College Station households reporting that someone in their household used them at least once a month during the open season (Table 2). With the exception of the Lincoln Center, outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts and festivals/events, other recreation services, for the most part, were used by fewer than 20% of the households in College Station during the course of the year. These data suggest that the department's emphasis should be on the development of parks and greenways, with athletic and recreation facilities and programs being regarded as of secondary importance in future allocations of resources.

Survey Results-- Table 2 Frequency of Use

N=534

	Not at all		Few times a year		Once Month		About Once a Week		Almost Daily	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PARKS RELATED										
Neighborhood/Community Parks	61	11.60	159	30.23	93	17.68	141	26.81	72	13.69
Walking Trails/ Bike Paths	131	24.86	137	26.00	81	15.37	105	19.92	73	13.85
Playgrounds	243	46.29	136	25.90	60	11.43	61	11.62	25	4.76
Ponds/ Lakes	209	39.81	183	34.86	95	18.10	30	5.71	8	1.52
Picnic Tables/Pavilions	199	38.12	221	42.34	71	13.60	26	4.98	5	0.96

RECREATION RELATED

Swimming Pools	261	50.10	116	22.26	42	8.06	68	13.05	34	6.53
Wolf Pen Amphitheatre	202	38.55	249	47.52	58	11.07	12	2.29	3	0.57
Kids Klub	473	90.27	13	2.48	3	0.57	6	1.15	29	5.53
Recreation Center	347	66.86	102	19.65	34	6.55	21	4.05	15	2.89
Fitness Programs	446	85.44	44	8.43	15	2.87	7	1.34	10	1.92
Youth Soccer Fields	428	81.52	37	7.05	21	4.00	32	6.10	7	1.33
Outdoor Basketball Courts	320	61.30	116	22.22	55	10.54	25	4.79	6	1.15
Tennis Courts	360	68.57	95	18.10	42	8.00	22	4.19	5	0.95
Youth Baseball Fields	451	86.07	44	8.40	11	2.10	13	2.48	5	0.95
Adult Soccer Fields	460	87.62	30	5.71	18	3.43	14	2.67	3	0.57
Xtra Education	440	83.81	69	13.14	9	1.71	4	0.76	3	0.57
Youth Softball Fields	468	89.31	32	6.11	7	1.34	14	2.67	3	0.57
Lincoln Center	454	86.64	52	9.92	14	2.67	1	0.19	3	0.57
Teen Activities	484	92.37	20	3.82	11	2.10	6	1.15	3	0.57
Festivals/Events	228	43.59	247	47.23	40	7.65	6	1.15	2	0.38
Adult Baseball Fields	442	84.67	48	9.20	19	3.64	11	2.11	2	0.38
EXIT Teen Center	493	93.90	22	4.19	4	0.76	4	0.76	2	0.38
Adult Softball Fields	418	79.77	66	12.60	16	3.05	23	4.39	1	0.19
Youth Flag Football Fields	485	92.56	28	5.34	4	0.76	6	1.15	1	0.19
Volleyball Courts	410	78.24	81	15.46	23	4.39	10	1.91	0	0.00
Senior Programs	481	91.62	32	6.10	11	2.10	1	0.19	0	0.00
Adult Flag Football Fields	489	93.32	25	4.77	8	1.53	2	0.38	0	0.00

Survey Results -- Priorities



Residents ranked Trails, Trees, and Neighborhood/Community Parks as the three top priorities.

Respondents were presented with the set of items listed in Table 3 and asked to indicate for each of them whether they should be a high, medium or low priority in future investment decisions. Three major investment priorities emerged. First, were items related to **trails**, reflecting the widespread use of Walking Trails/Bike Paths reported in Table 2. By far the highest priority was to provide lighting for walking and jogging paths. This was complemented with the request for more hike and bike trails linking parks, neighborhoods and schools, which was ranked fourth, and more walking paths around parks and athletic fields which was ranked seventh. Among city employees, the trails' items also emerged as highest priority being ranked first, fourth and eighth. These also appeared prominently in respondents' open-ended responses which are reported in Appendix D.

The second investment priority was **trees**. Providing more shade trees at parks was ranked third and providing more trees along city streets was ranked fifth. This was complemented by the second ranked more generic landscaping priority of providing quiet, green spaces throughout the city. Together these three items make a strong case for prioritizing investment in “**greening the city**”. City employees ranked the three “greening the city” items third, seventh and tenth.

The third major theme reflected the relatively high frequency of use reported in Table 2 for **Neighborhood/Community Parks**. Ranked eighth and ninth, respectively, were acquisition of more parkland and enhancement of maintenance at existing parks.

There was strong sentiment expressed by 28% of the sample as a high priority that there should be more investment in improving accessibility for those with disabilities. Among the programmatic, as opposed to facility items, priority was given to providing more art and music programs.

Like the residents, PARD and city staff regarded improving access for those with disabilities as a high priority (2). There was a higher PARD staff priority given to

offering Xtra Education classes at weekends (7) and, providing personal growth classes (10).

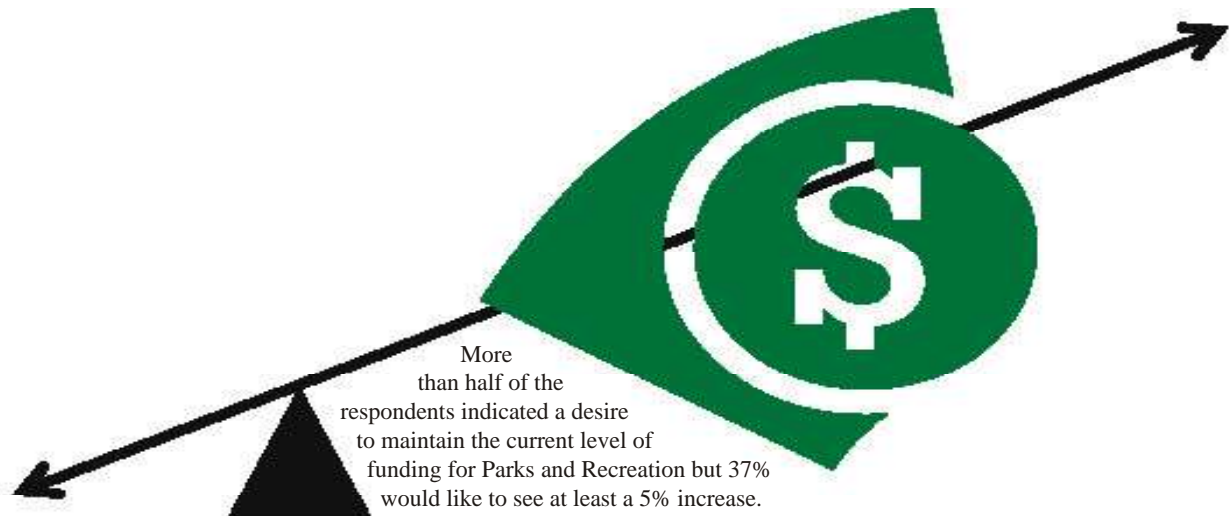
The PARD employees' dominant priority was the allocation of more funds to enhance the maintenance of existing parks which probably reflects both the predominance in numbers of the park staff among those who completed the survey and their pride in what they do (maintenance incorporates trees, flower beds, irrigation systems, cleaning, mowing, painting, building maintenance, et al.). The city staff gave relatively high priority to developing a senior center (5) and providing playgrounds at athletic fields (6).

Table 3 Level of Priority

N=534

	None		Low		Medium		High	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Provide lighting for walking and jogging paths	15	2.86	72	13.74	159	30.34	278	53.05
Provide quiet, green spaces throughout the city	20	3.81	116	22.10	196	37.33	193	36.76
Provide more shade trees at parks	17	3.24	107	20.38	210	40.00	191	36.38
Link parks, neighborhoods, and schools with hike and bike trails	23	4.40	113	21.61	203	38.81	184	35.18
Provide more trees along city streets	44	8.38	140	26.67	177	33.71	164	31.24
Improve accessibility for those with disabilities (e.g., pool lifts, sidewalks, parking, bathrooms)	24	4.59	133	25.43	216	41.30	150	28.68
Provide more walking paths around parks and athletic fields	24	4.58	141	26.91	226	43.13	133	25.38
Acquire additional park land	49	9.35	167	31.87	187	35.69	121	23.09
Allocate more funds to enhance the maintenance of existing parks	27	5.17	111	21.26	268	51.34	116	22.22
Provide more art and music programs	61	11.71	183	35.12	176	33.78	101	19.39
Provide a designated Senior Center	61	11.60	194	36.88	183	34.79	88	16.73
Provide more directional signs identifying the way to parks	65	12.38	213	40.57	164	31.24	83	15.81
Provide playgrounds at athletic fields	38	7.29	188	36.08	221	42.42	74	14.20
Provide personal growth classes (e.g., car maintenance, career development)	73	14.01	198	38.00	176	33.78	74	14.20
Improve public bus transportation to existing park and recreation facilities	73	14.01	198	38.00	176	33.78	74	14.20
Place more benches in parks and along trails	39	7.46	166	31.74	246	47.04	72	13.77
Provide more seasonal color and landscaping in parks	46	8.81	216	41.38	188	36.02	72	13.79
Offer Xtra Education Classes on weekends	111	21.31	220	42.23	123	23.61	67	12.86
Provide more access to the indoor pool at the Junior High School during school vacations	91	17.50	211	40.58	158	30.38	60	11.54
Provide more undesignated, open play space at neighborhood parks	42	8.03	231	44.17	191	36.52	59	11.28
Provide technology in parks (wireless access, geocoding)	169	32.31	199	38.05	97	18.55	58	11.09
Provide a wider variety of aquatic classes	74	14.20	270	51.82	130	24.95	47	9.02
Provide tables in parks for chess, checkers, cards	76	14.50	242	46.18	163	31.11	43	8.21
Provide space for new activities such as cricket, lacrosse, rugby	98	18.70	271	51.72	123	23.47	32	6.11
Provide storage for sports leagues equipment	137	26.35	279	53.65	86	16.54	18	3.46

Survey Results -- Level of Tax Support



When respondents were asked if they wanted to increase or decrease the amount of tax they paid for existing and new park and recreation services, the dominant response by slightly more than half of them was to retain the same level of investment. Slightly over 10% of the sample indicated they would prefer to decrease tax support for both existing and new amenities. However, approximately 37% indicated they would be willing to increase their support for parks, although for the most part this increase was limited to a 5% increase. These data suggest there is strong citizen support for parks. In an era in which advocacy of tax cuts is a dominant feature of political dialog, almost 90% of residents indicated a preference for maintaining or increasing funding for parks and recreation.

Table 4 -- Level of Tax Support

N=534

	-20%		-15%		-10%		-5%		Remain the		+5%		+10%		+15%		+20%		Total
Would you like to see the level of tax support for EXISTING park and recreation services changed?	16	3.13	5	0.98	12	2.35	21	4.11	271	53.03	122	23.87	51	9.98	4	0.78	9	1.76	511
Would you like to see the city's tax investment in NEW park and recreation facilities change?	18	3.54	3	0.59	11	2.16	23	4.52	260	51.08	124	24.36	51	10.02	8	1.57	9	1.77	509

Survey Results -- Priority Investment Areas



Residents were provided with a list of potential investment areas determined from the focus groups data and asked to prioritize investments for the next ten years (See Table 5). **Trails** were the dominant request ranking first, second and seventh. Indeed, if they were aggregated into a single category, they would overwhelm all other categories.

This reflects the changing way in which people now use park-like facilities. Prior to the 1990s, parks were used primarily for picnicking and social activities. While this use is still important, the primary uses over the past decade have been walking, jogging, biking, skateboarding et al., i.e., linear activities which use the periphery of the park area only. The enhanced interest in these activities is reflected in the prioritization shown here for trails which will accommodate them.

The second prioritization is for **neighborhood parks**, ponds/lakes, and gardens/arboretum. Again, these reflect dominant use patterns reported in Table 2. However, the prominence of ponds/lakes and gardens/arboretum suggest a desire to invest more in water and horticultural features in our parks. For the most part, neighborhood parks are minimally landscaped, (they are not equipped with sprinkler systems) and these responses indicate a higher level of landscaping should be incorporated. The primary challenge in responding to this prioritization

Survey Results -- Priority Investment Areas

is that in times of drought, the city by ordinance is required to shut off its landscape sprinkler systems. Hence, the landscaping dies. The solution to this conundrum may be for the city to develop a network of pipes that delivers recycled water to landscapes. This is being actively considered by the city. Another barrier to enhanced landscaping is the availability of additional horticultural and forestry staff to undertake the work, but some of this requirement may be met by soliciting neighborhood residents to volunteer their labor.

The major surprise in these data was the widespread interest in developing a Zoo and a Water Park. These may reflect a desire for something that is “different” to enhance the variety of experiences that can be offered. It is unlikely to be feasible for the city to develop a Zoo, even one that features only Texas species. Both the capital and operating expenses involved are substantial- -far higher than those associated with any of the city’s other facilities. If those identifying a zoo as one of their priorities were aware of the costs involved, it seems likely that their level of enthusiasm for the project would drop.

The **Water Park** prioritization is something the city should explore with a feasibility study to ascertain the capital and operational expenses associated with such a facility, and the potential of partnering with a private operator to provide it as was done with the ice rink. Successful efforts have been made to convert Bee Creek into a pseudo water park, but the pool’s formal, traditional “tank” design limits what can be done there. Residents have responded with enthusiasm to the play features that have been included at Bee Creek, which suggests a water park would be well-received. Three points should be made about the water park option:

- 1 If such a facility was built, it would probably usurp much of Bee Creek’s demand (and perhaps that of Thomas and Southwood also).
- 2 The capital and operating costs of a water park substantially exceed that of a traditional pool. However, these are likely to be partially off-set by increased revenues. Users expect to pay higher admission prices for a water park, and it will attract more users by drawing from the region rather than only from College Station.
- 3 Southwood Park was intended to be a water park when it was constructed in the mid-1980s. However, vigorous opposition to the concept emanated from the neighborhood, so the decision was made to construct a traditional pool.

Table 5-Top Priorities

N=534		
	#	%
Walking/Biking Trails	204	38.20
Nature Trails	157	29.40
Zoo	152	28.46
Water Park	145	27.15
Ponds/Lakes	140	26.22
Neighborhood Parks	124	23.22
Extensive regional trail system	123	23.03
Gardens/ Arboretum	110	20.60
Art/Music Facilities	106	19.85
Dog Park	101	18.91
Senior Center	100	18.73



Respondents ranked Trails, Neighborhood Parks, and a Water Park as Priority Investment Areas over the next 5-10 years.

Survey Results -- Priority Investment Areas



Other elements that received prominent prioritization were **Art/Music** facilities, Dog Park, and Senior Center. The art/music facilities prioritization probably reflects discussion in the community for over a decade relating to developing an arts center. At this time, this appears to be the remit of the Arts Council rather than the PARD. However, the PARD could perhaps explore the potential of expanding its offerings in arts/music. A **Dog Park** is being incorporated at Steeplechase Park and being considered for inclusion at University Park. Their availability is likely to make it possible to more vigorously encourage dog hygiene in other parks.



There is growing momentum to create more space that can be used by senior citizens. The PARD's seniors' programs are expanding and the council has authorized the exploration of more space to accommodate their needs. However, it is unlikely that a specialist **senior citizen center** designed for their exclusive use is the solution. A more feasible option may be the creation of a community-oriented center (perhaps similar in concept to the existing conference center on George Bush Drive which is nearing the end of its useful life) that can be used by a multitude of community groups, including seniors.

PARD and city employees gave similar prioritization to the Water Park and Zoo (see Tables 5B and 5C in

Appendix C). Their support for the Water Park offers further evidence that the feasibility of this facility should be explored.

The PARD employees' substantial support for camping areas, adult softball fields, skate park and indoor recreation center were all items not recognized as high priorities by residents. This may indicate that staff have insights derived from their professional training which elude residents who are not intimately involved in providing services. Like residents, city employees also identified ponds/lakes and trails as prominent priorities.

Survey Results -- Service Quality Issues



Respondents were particularly complimentary about the maintenance quality of parks and the quality of facilities and services provided.

Most residents reported being satisfied with most of the service quality issues. They were particularly complimentary about the maintenance quality of the parks and the quality of facilities and services provided. Approximately 10% of those who considered themselves to be “knowledgeable” about the issue reported not being satisfied with the PARD’s offerings (see Table 6).

The issue which appears to warrant additional effort by the PARD relates to *communicating with residents*. A majority of respondents who had knowledge of the issue reported they did not find it easy to offer feedback to the PARD or to obtain answers to questions. This was reinforced somewhat by one-third of the sample indicating they were not well-informed about the PARD’s offerings. The substantial turnover in the city’s population, especially that associated with college students, makes this a particularly difficult challenge. However, this community is technology oriented and much more could be done to communicate with residents via use of a website. The city’s website is not easily accessible by the PARD because the department lacks the employee capacity to insert daily updates on the site. It seems unlikely that the communication problem will be improved until such a position is established in the department. Residents’ concerns regarding communication and knowledge of programs were also discussed in the open-ended responses. These responses confirmed the need to better communicate with new residents (see Appendix D).

There appeared to be widespread support for the contentions that the PARD needed to work most closely with the College Station Independent School District, police and fire on safety in the neighborhoods, and with neighborhood groups. Responding affirmatively does not necessarily mean the PARD is inadequate in its current levels of collaboration. However, open-ended responses indicated that working with Police on safety and security, and working with city-wide groups on health and activity issues could further improve citizen’s appraisals of PARD services and contributions to city-wide goals.

City employees concurred with residents' views that the PARD should endeavor to improve its level of communication with residents. As city employees, it was anticipated that they would not perceive there to be difficulty in offering feedback to the PARD but 74% who had experience with the PARD reported such a difficulty. Perhaps, most surprisingly, two-thirds of city employees indicated they were not well-informed about plans for parks in their neighborhood. This was a much larger proportion than in the residents' sample. Almost one-third claimed not to be well-informed about the PARD's offerings. If the 57% of the sample who checked "I have no knowledge" on this question are included, then the magnitude of the communication challenge is accentuated (See Tables 6B and 6C in Appendix C).

Table 6 Service Quality Issues

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		I have no knowledge	N (534)
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	# % ^b	
I am well-informed about College Station's park facilities and recreation programs	28	6.25	117	26.12	280	62.50	23	5.13	83 15.63	531
The Department should work more closely with schools to develop parks and offer programs	4	1.08	30	8.09	286	77.09	55	14.82	151 28.93	522
College Station parks and recreation facilities are accessible to people with disabilities	1	0.38	24	9.06	212	80.00	29	10.94	263 49.81	528
College Station Parks are well maintained and clean	4	0.88	42	9.19	341	74.62	74	16.19	67 12.79	524
In general, I am satisfied with the facilities and services provided by the Parks & Recreation Department	7	1.54	42	9.25	366	80.62	46	10.13	68 13.03	522
The Department should work more closely with police and fire departments on safety in parks/neighborhoods	2	0.58	51	14.70	228	65.71	68	19.60	178 33.90	525
Overall, the City of College Station has a "park-like" ambiance about it	22	4.89	132	29.33	283	62.89	35	7.78	57 11.24	507
The swimming pools are too crowded	8	2.19	87	23.84	249	68.22	29	7.95	155 29.81	520
I am well-informed about plans for parks in my neighborhood	4	1.67	45	18.75	130	54.17	65	27.08	285 54.29	525
It is easy for me to offer feedback to the park department and to obtain answers from them to any questions	38	14.73	153	59.30	94	36.43	11	4.26	235 47.67	493
The Department should work more closely with neighborhood groups to plan and maintain parks	10	4.50	60	27.03	149	67.12	13	5.86	297 57.23	519
Automobile traffic around parks should be diverted or slowed down	2	0.53	21	5.57	300	79.58	56	14.85	150 28.46	527
I can get to my favorite park facilities on foot or by bicycle	7	1.66	90	21.38	244	57.96	87	20.67	100 19.19	521

Survey Results -- Relative Importance of Alternate Community Goals

In addition to providing enjoyable opportunities for individuals, park and recreation services have the potential to contribute to a wider set of community goals. Respondents were presented with a list of items which represented dimensions of eight broad community goals and were asked how important they viewed these issues. The eight broad goals are shown in the bold type in Table 7, while dimensions of them are listed underneath each goal in Appendix D. The scores for each goal shown in bold are the averages derived from the dimension items underneath the goal. The scales ranged from 1 through 7. By far the most important goal of the eight listed was **preventing youth crime**, with 72% rating it 6 or 7 at the extremely important end of the scale. The other item which received higher than average support was **enhancing real estate values**, which 60% rated at the 6 or 7 level. Support for the other goals at the 6 or 7 level was consistently around 50%, with the exception of attracting and retaining retirees and addressing the needs of people who are unemployed which were viewed as being of lesser importance and received approximately 41% and 36%, respectively.

The perceived importance of preventing youth crime provides a strong rationale for the PARD's youth sports, and teen after-school programs such as those at Kids Klub, the EXIT Teen Center and the Lincoln Center. The support for enhancing real estate programs, provides a rationale for the interest in parks, trails and "greening the city" which emerged in the earlier questions because these features are known to have a substantial positive effect on residents' property values.

Like residents, the PARD staff rated preventing youth crime as the most important of the eight goals listed. However, it was essentially ranked equal with attracting



tourists. In the past decade, the PARD has emphasized its central role in tourism and the staff's high ranking probably reflects this emphasis. Enhancing real estate values was also ranked highly.

City employees like the other two groups ranked preventing youth crime first, followed by attracting tourists and enhancing real estate values. Like PARD staff, they gave a much higher ranking to attracting tourists than did residents. These results suggest that staff as a whole have an appreciation of the economic development contribution of tourism to the city that is not yet shared by residents.

Table 7-- Performance

	6.0&7.0	
	#	%
Preventing Youth Crime	379	72.16
Environmental Stewardship	280	53.27
Enhancing Real Estate Values	314	59.67
Attracting and Retaining Businesses	268	50.85
Improving Community Health	278	52.82
Attracting and Retaining Retirees	213	40.61
Attracting Tourists	257	48.86
Addressing the Needs of People who are Underemployed	192	36.48

Survey Results -- PARD's Perceived Contribution to Alternate Community Goals



When respondents were presented with the same set of eight goals and dimensions, and asked their perceptions of the PARD's current contributions to each of them, the scores were disappointingly low. Although 72% had indicated preventing youth crime was an important community goal, only 21% considered the PARD made a large or very large contribution (6 or 7 on the 7 point scale) to that goal (see Table 8A, Appendix C). The highest ranking of the PARD's contributions to these goals was **enhancing real estate values** where 30.5% rated them 6 or 7. In the past decade the PARD has frequently communicated its central role in attracting tourists through its hosting of sports

Table 8-- Contribution

	6.0&7.0	
	#	%
Preventing Youth Crime	108	20.99
Environmental Stewardship	66	12.89
Enhancing Real Estate Values	156	30.49
Attracting and Retaining Businesses	108	21.05
Improving Community Health	82	16.05
Attracting and Retaining Retirees	59	11.47
Attracting Tourists	139	26.98
Addressing the Needs of People who are Underemployed	46	8.91

tournaments and festivals/special events, but this role was recognized as being large or very large by only 27%.

The PARD is viewed by relatively few residents as having an impact on **community health**. Given the recent concerns about obesity and lifestyle health problems; their costs to society; the leadership role that PARDs in other communities have exerted in the area of community health; and the potential of the PARD's programs to contribute to alleviating the problem, it may be desirable for the PARD to explore opportunities for expanding its community health role.

To strengthen widespread community support, the PARD should make an effort to reposition their youth recreation

services so they align directly with young crime prevention and align their "greening of the city" programs with enhanced real estate values and consider expanding their community health role. These are the most important issue to residents and aligning services more closely with them will reinforce and solidify the community's support for parks and recreation.

The responses of PARD staff were higher than those of residents reflecting their professional awareness that what the PARD offers contribute more than only an opportunity to participate in "fun and games." Further, the three highest ranked were the same three that the staff perceived to be most important in Table 7A, i.e., enhancing real estate, attracting tourists and preventing youth crime. The city employees' perceptions of the PARD's contribution to these community goals typically were higher than those of residents and lower than those of PARD staff. Their highest ranking was for the PARD's contribution to enhancing real estate values, followed closely by attracting tourists, and then preventing youth crime.

Overview -- Planning for the next 5-10 years

The needs assessment results suggest that for the next ten years the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Master Plan should guide and develop the city's landscape so it becomes more park-like. The findings suggest the PARD should:

- Concentrate on “greening the city” by acquiring more park-land and increasing tree plantings, vegetation, and color throughout the city.
- Improve the trail network by adding additional trail infrastructure and connecting existing trails to each other, schools, residential neighborhoods, and businesses.
- Maintain high levels of maintenance at community and neighborhood Parks.
- Continue to offer high quality youth programs that residents feel support the community-wide goal of alleviating juvenile delinquency.
- Review the feasibility of building a Water Park in College Station.
- Improve existing, and create new, communication mechanisms with residents.
- Work with other city agencies, neighborhood associations, and citywide groups to address safety and health issues.
- Improve senior programs by creating a multi-use center that has the capacity to better meet seniors' needs.

